



THE SUSTAINABLE SCHOOL: DIS/MIS-INFORMATION AND FAKE NEWS

False or misleading information can take different forms:

- **Disinformation** is information deliberately created to mislead or confuse.
- **Misinformation** is incorrect information shared without intent to deceive.
- **Fake news** refers to fabricated stories presented as real news, often designed to attract attention, influence opinions, or spread doubt.

All three can distort young people's understanding of climate change and sustainability. They undermine scientific evidence, create confusion, delay urgent action, and reduce trust in reliable sources.



HOW CAN SCHOOLS ADDRESS DISINFORMATION?



In a world where young people get much of their information online and through social media, educators can play a crucial role in helping students think critically and navigate digital spaces responsibly. Teaching young people to recognise, question and challenge misinformation equips them with essential skills related to climate crisis and sustainability. Students can learn to identify the tactics used to spread false information and recognise misleading content, question sources and engage with evidence-based information.

Five denialist tactics (FLICC) used to spread false information



Conspiracy Theories: These rely on finding patterns or connections between unrelated events to suggest a hidden plot.



Impossible Expectations: These statements tend to argue that because an idea is difficult to understand, it must be a conspiracy.



Cherry Picking: This refers to a statement that offers selective evidence ignoring contradictory evidence.



Logical Fallacies: These assume a causal connection between two events or outcomes simply because they occur together, without evidence to support the link.



Fake Experts: Involves using unqualified or biased individuals to support a claim.

Teaching students to recognise disinformation tactics, such as cherry-picking or fake experts (see above), helps them evaluate both factual claims and the emotional manipulation often present in disinformation. This skill is increasingly important as AI-generated fake news and deepfakes become more convincing. Free pedagogical games such as '[Get Bad News](#)' and '[Cranky Uncle](#)' provide engaging ways for students to explore how disinformation operates.

IDEAS TO CONSIDER



Storytelling in the community. Work with local voices and real-life examples to promote trustworthy information and help students understand how misinformation distorts the truth. Grounding learning in authentic experiences makes it more relatable and memorable.



Involve parents and community groups. Engage families and local networks to create a supportive learning environment that extends lessons beyond the classroom. Their involvement reinforces key messages and builds trust in shared learning goals.



Empower students to challenge misinformation within their peer groups, online spaces, and local communities. Promoting youth voice in campaigns or school-wide initiatives cultivates leadership and reinforces civic responsibility.



Gamification. Use interactive games and simulations to teach media literacy and strategies for dealing with misinformation. This approach keeps students engaged while building their critical thinking and analysis skills in a dynamic, memorable way.



Building resilience. Teach students to recognise and resist misinformation before they encounter it. Proactive approaches - like discussing how misinformation spreads- equip young people with the tools to protect themselves and others from false or misleading content.



Fact-checking as a shared skill. You don't need to have all the answers but knowing where to look matters. Introduce students to trusted fact-checking websites and tools (see below) that can help identify false narratives and verify claims.



Partner with local media and experts. Collaborate with journalists, fact-checkers, or media organisations to bring expert knowledge into the classroom. These partnerships help demystify the media landscape and highlight responsible information practices.

PROJECTS AND PRACTICE

- ★ The [Eco-Literacy and Green Education for Climate Action \(ECOLitAct\)](#) is an **Erasmus+** project supporting educators and vocational education and training learners in eco-literacy, media literacy, and critical thinking to counter climate-related misinformation.
- ★ The **Erasmus+** funded [POWER Project](#) addresses disinformation in the green energy sector by promoting fact-based discussions on renewable energy across **Romania, Malta, Spain and Moldova**.
- ★ [SciLM](#) is an **EU-funded** project providing digital literacy and misinformation training for educators in multiple European countries.



CHALLENGES

 “Integrating media literacy into everyday lessons can be a challenge”

 “School priorities may not focus on this right now”

 “I am unsure how to equip students with these skills effectively”

Start small. Incorporate media literacy into subjects where it naturally fits, or introduce standalone activities that build these skills step-by-step.

Advocate for the importance of media literacy by showing how it prepares students for a sustainable and informed future. Align these efforts with the school’s broader educational goals to make them a priority.

Use available resources such as online tools, lesson plan and examples. These can help students critically assess information and engage with sustainability in meaningful ways.

RESOURCES

- ★ The European Commission’s '[Guidelines for Teachers and Educators on Tackling Disinformation and Promoting Digital Literacy through Education and Training](#)' provide hands-on guidance, practical tips and activity plans.
- ★ The toolkit for teachers on '[How to spot and fight disinformation](#)' is a European Commission resource for secondary education teachers on how to start conversations with students about false information. It includes a ready-made presentation with videos for teachers and case studies with discussion questions for class group work.
- ★ The European Climate Pact toolkit on '[How to talk to people about climate change](#)' presents six common arguments people use to justify climate inaction.
- ★ The [European Digital Media Observatory](#) coordinates a network of national and multinational hubs that bring together fact-checkers, media literacy experts and researchers to tackle disinformation across Europe.

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